

## **Position Statement**

### **Protection of paramedics and other healthcare and aid workers in conflict zones**

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#### **Key statement**

The Australasian College of Paramedicine (the College) strongly condemns attacks on paramedics, other healthcare professionals, and humanitarian aid workers in conflict zones. Civilians in conflict zones have the right to live and work in a safe environment, and to access healthcare and medical treatment.

The College is calling for more to be done to ensure safe access to healthcare and to protect our paramedic and healthcare colleagues who are providing important life-saving and urgent healthcare to civilians in conflict zones around the world.

Under extremely challenging and dangerous conditions, paramedics, other healthcare professionals, and humanitarian aid workers are risking their lives to deliver essential healthcare and support to civilians. They face significant risks, including targeted attacks, abductions, and the destruction of medical facilities<sup>1</sup>

A recent report published by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition stated that, in 2023, there were 2,562 recorded incidents of violence against or obstruction of healthcare in conflicts across 30 countries or regions. This marks an increase of more than 500 incidents compared with 2022, representing a 25% rise<sup>1</sup>. Shockingly, 487 health workers were reported killed, among them paramedics and ambulance workers<sup>1</sup>. This must stop.

Attacks on healthcare workers and facilities "may amount to violations of International Humanitarian Law"<sup>2</sup>. Protecting healthcare workers and ensuring that healthcare facilities are not attacked is a moral imperative for upholding global health and human rights standards<sup>3</sup>.

- The College demands sustained and committed action from our governments in calling for the protection of healthcare workers and medical facilities.
- The College stands firm in its commitment to the safety and protection of paramedics, other healthcare professionals, humanitarian aid workers, and healthcare facilities in conflict zones.

- The College supports paramedics and their loved ones across Australasia who are closely affected by these escalating and enduring conflicts.

1. *Critical condition: violence against health care in conflict*: Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition; 2023 [Available from: <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-SHCC-Critical-Conditions.pdf>]

2. *Attacks on health care in Gaza Strip unacceptable, says WHO*: World Health Organization; 2023 [Available from: <https://www.emro.who.int/media/news/attacks-on-health-care-in-gaza-strip-unacceptable-says-who.html>]

3. *Human rights*: World Health Organization; 2023 [Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-rights-and-health>]